DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 344 296 EA 023 852

TITLE Strategies for Public School Reform.
INSTITUTION Multidisciplinary Academy of Clinical Education, Pasadena, CA.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cognitive Style; *Cooperative Programs; Disadvantaged; *Educational Change; Educational Opportunities; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; Individual Differences; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Learning Problems; *Prevention; *Public Education; Public Schools; Special Needs Students
IDENTIFIERS *Multidisciplinary Academy of Clinical Education CA

ABSTRACT

The Multidisciplinary Academy of Clinical Education (MACE) believes that collaboration among children, teachers, parents, and clinicians is essential to prevent educational disabilities and handicaps. In this report, MACE offers suggestions regarding the general education of all children. A growing number of children are classified as having learning disabilities simply because they have lacked suitable educational opportunities. Most learning problems can be prevented by more efficacious general education that accommodates individual differences in children's learning styles. MACE believes the following elements are essential to improving the quality of U.S. public education: (1) ensuring competent parenting; (2) designing schools to serve their communities; (3) transforming schools into learning communities; (4) enhancing teacher professionalism; (5) reforming school personnel education; and (6) establishing a national education watch. Successful identification and management of learning disabilities means increasing public awareness, detecting functional and educational disabilities early, providing a continuum of services, involving children and their parents, employing a variety of approaches, developing the clinical educator role, and providing administrative integration and support. Specific actions are recommended, along with a topical list of 121 books and articles. (MLH)

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Multidisciplinary Academy of Clinical Education

STRATEGIES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL REFORM

EA 023 852

MACE

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MACE

The Multidisciplinary Academy of Clinical Education is an organization of leaders in the fields of communicative disorders, education, neurology, ophthalmology, optometry, psychiatry, psychology, reading, and other related professions. Its purposes are to enhance the understanding of children with special educational needs and to foster interdisciplinary teamwork. Its focus is on the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of learning disabilities.

How to Use this Document.....

The first page summarizes the strategies recommended by MACE for public school reform. The body of the document provides the details of those strategies. A Call to Action then is offered to guide the implementation of reforms. Finally, a list of readings that offer greater depth in topics related to educational reform is provided.

SUMMARY

The Multidisciplinary Academy of Clinical Education believes that the following elements are essential to improving the quality of the public education of children in the United States:

Ensure the Competent Parenting of Children

* Parenting education in the schools
* Prenatal and well-baby health care and parent training
* Identification of high-risk children
* Operation Headstart for all eligible children

Design Public Schools to Serve their Communities

* Parent, business, and community institution involvement
* Collaboration with family supportive community services

Transform Schools into Learning Communities

* Mutual learning for students, teachers, and administrators
* Positive school cultures developed through team efforts

Enhance the Professionalism of Teachers

* Salaries and advancement commensurate with training, experience, and performance
* Involvement of teachers in school management
* Ongoing continuing education by and for teachers

Reform the Education of School Personnel

* National revision of the education of school personnel
* Internships for new teachers
* Multidisciplinary training of clinical educators

Establish a National Education Watch

* Leadership to improve education in the United States
* Dissemination of information about model programs
* Guidance of national data collection
* Coordination of federally funded educational research

STRATEGIES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL REFORM

The Multidisciplinary Academy of Clinical Education believes that collaboration between children, teachers, parents, and clinicians is essential in the prevention of educational disabilities and handicaps. For this reason MACE offers suggestions regarding the general education of all children. This is particularly important because of the growing number of children who are classified as having learning disabilities, simply because they have not had suitable educational opportunities.

The evidence is clear that the majority of **learning problems,** as contrasted with **learning disabilities,** can be prevented by more efficacious general education that accommodates individual differences in children's learning styles.

The following statement was prepared to assist in planning for improvements in public education. Because we do not believe that there are universally applicable solutions to the central problems, we outline principles for addressing them rather than specific practices. We also believe that the focus for change must be not only on schools but on the children, their families, their communities, and the society in which we all live.

The futures of our children are not the responsibility of educators alone. The entire nation must determine how our children are educated by making a general commitment to supporting the development of children in their homes and schools.

I. The Public School Crisis

There is no question that the social ills of our society as it transitions from the Industrial Age to the Information Age in a global economy are adversely affecting public education. The sense of community has broken down in many schools, and there is a general lack of respect for educators. As a result many students are not learning what they need to know, and many parents are caught in the middle of their lives with inadequate knowledge and skills.

For disadvantaged children the key issues are more social than educational. These young people will not make significant progress until they have decent housing, better diets, and safer environments in which to live. For them and for the rest of the nation's children, the key educational issues revolve around providing stimulating learning communities conducive to acquiring the knowledge and skills essential for the achievement of their potentials in our society.

The problems of public schools can be categorized as related to unsafe and poorly controlled environments; to impediments to the professionalism of school staffs; to inadequate instructional resources; and most importantly to unprepared and unmotivated students. Furthermore, children with learning disabilities are inadequately served even in highly regarded public and private schools, because those schools lack specialized knowledge and resources.

Unless drastic actions are taken, the nation faces the continued deterioration of public education. One result will be the expansion of home education and private schools. Because public schools are the bridge between the affluent and the disadvantaged, the trend toward social class segregation will be reinforced. Ultimately in the next century a divided and inadequately trained work force will undermine our standard of living. Intolerable numbers of the uneducated will be forced into the ranks of a permanent underclass, thus undermining our democracy itself.

II. Time for Action

Since the deterioration of the public schools was popularly identified in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in its report *Nation at Risk,* a number of reform efforts have been undertaken. Their initial focus was on tighter controls of education through state standards, testing, and monitoring of teachers and students. At the same time a concerted effort within the schools was devoted to developing "effective schools" in which high expectations, discipline, strong leadership, and teamwork were stressed.

In more recent years, as these streams of change have continued, a political movement has emerged advocating increased parental choice of schools for children and the decentralization of decision making in school systems.

At the present time a climate exists in which constructive solutions to the public school crisis may well be possible because a number of interests outside the schools themselves are converging on educational reform. Educators themselves recognize that they cannot carry the full responsibility for educating children.

The following are among these outside interests in school reform. The civil rights movements stress the empowerment of people to influence their communities and schools. Volunteer organizations are building neighborhood relationships through community workers. Child development professionals and clinicians stress the importance of dependable child-parent relationships in preparing children for learning and the need for collaborative teamwork in schools. Business leaders are finding that accommodating the family needs of workers and investing in education improve productivity. And politicians are considering ways in which public policies can strengthen, rather than undermine, families. They also are recognizing the value of both national leadership in education and local control in public schools.

In 1989 at the historic Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia, the President and the nation's governors set the following educational targets for the year 2000:

1) All children in America will start school ready to learn.

2) The percentage of students graduating from high school will increase to at least 90 percent.

3) American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve with demonstrated competency in English, mathematics, science, history, and geography.

4) American students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

5) Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

6) Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

In 1991 President Bush proposed educational reforms involving national educational testing, parental choice of schools, federal sponsorship of experimental schools, and a range of health and social services for children and families provided through the public schools.

In the past, particular epochs of school reform have made significant differences in the quality of public education. The time appears to be propitious once again for school reform if the efforts of all levels of society can be mobilized to confront the current public school crisis.

III. The Basic Problems

The need for school reform is painfully revealed by the glaring contrasts in our public schools. Those schools that have the support of their families and communities show high levels of excellence. Those schools without supportive families and communities, regardless of socioeconomic class, have deteriorated to completely unacceptable levels. Because they have become detached from their families, neighborhoods, and communities, some schools now are regarded as resented symbols of authority rather than as places for learning.

Although public schools were founded to supplement the educational functions of families, their effectiveness over the years has been diminished by managing children as free-standing individuals rather than as members of families. Moreover, public education has been viewed erroneously as taking place only in standardized classrooms during daytime hours from kindergarten through high school rather than as lifetime learning. This fact has created a real distinction between education and schooling.

The narrow definitions of education in scope and time span have led to fragmentated and discontinuous schooling that emphasizes the curricula and schedules of schools rather than the education of children. This fragmentation is particularly obvious in special education where services for children with special needs often are inadequately coordinated and discontinuous from year to year.

Furthermore, demographic changes in the United States have dramatically altered many of the assumptions and methods of American education. Students in schools at all levels come from families with increasingly diverse racial, religious, socioeconomic, and cultural characteristics.

Rather than devoting attention to these demographic changes and to the neighborhoods and families in which children live, society has held unrealistic expectations of schools as instruments for solving social problems. The evidence is clear that there are crucial determinants of successful education that lie outside of the schools themselves. The focus on schools rather than on families and the places in which they live has deflected attention from the basic parental and socioeconomic causes of educational problems. In fact schools are at risk for accepting too much reponsibility for child rearing. We have lost a coherent vision of the role schools should play in our society, as parents have increasingly abdicated their responsibilities.

Another vital demographic fact must be faced. Adults without children currently dominate our society. Most are preoccupied with their own interests; the welfare of the next generation, and even of the Earth, is not their central concern. If adults without children are not convinced that the education of children affects the economy, and, therefore, their lives, schools will continue to be left to fend for themselves with too much expected of them while too little is given to them.

In addition the success of children in school depends upon supportive social and cultural

values that encourage cooperation with legitimate adult role models and that motivate children to achieve in school, as well as a society that holds out opportunities for a hopeful future. However, differences in cultural values and economic disadvantage restrict the educational and future employment opportunities for many children.

Furthermore, many students do not perceive the personal relevance of what they are learning. They are prone to misinterpret our society's emphasis on pleasure, consumerism, and independence as meaning schoolwork is onerous and unfulfilling. They do not understand how a particular skill or concept will help them earn a living, nor how it will help them lead a happier, more fulfilling life. As a result children largely have been faced with decisions about whether or not to conform to the bureaucratic requirements of schooling itself by working for grades as the only motivator.

Often overlooked is the subtle but powerful prejudice of juvenile ageism that fosters ignoring the needs of children and results in the discriminatory treatment and the segregation of children in ways that adults would not tolerate. In disguised revenge some young people view failure in school and thwarting adult expectations as successes.

Another attitude that is counterproductive to education is endemic in our society. It is the quest of parents, teachers, and researchers for simple causes and easy remedies for problems of all kinds. A pill, diet, computer program, or teaching technique may be helpful for some at a particular stage of development in a particular context, but none will take the place of hard work and patient understanding.

For all of these reasons, greater emphasis is needed in schools on the personal pleasure, satisfaction, and pride in achievement that generalize to other aspects of life, both vocational and recreational. These motivations are thwarted by the self-conscious competition between students that characterizes much of classroom schooling and that clearly separates the more successful from the less successful.

Lastly, the education of teachers, school administrators, and school-related personnel does not adequately prepare them for the realities of their jobs. Moreover, many school personnel have been demoralized by the lack of parental, community, and governmental support. As a result, talented women and men are now choosing other occupations that promise greater financial rewards, more opportunities for advancement, better working conditions, and more personal satisfactions.

IV. Principles for Public School Reform

MACE endorses the educational goals for each child of productive citizenship with essential knowledge, skills, self-esteem, ethical values, and a positive attitude toward life-long learning. However, schools cannot achieve these goals alone. The collaboration of children, parents, teachers, government, clinicians, and business is essential.

We believe that the ideal conception of education regards the community itself as the site of life-long learning with public schools as community centers that supplement the educational functions of families in the development of children. In this sense "schooling" as it now exists may or may not constitute education.

We also believe that the purpose of education is to prepare people for their careers and for life in our evolving society and culture. Since its inception public schooling in the United States has been striving for a balance between teaching the vocational skills needed by society and teaching the liberal

arts needed to advance our culture. Consequently, the public schooling of children is strongly influenced by the prevailing political emphasis on the economic goals of business or on the humanitarian values of a democratic society.

In the United States, the individualistic values of competition and excellence have succeeded in creating economic wealth but not a humane and moral society. If we are to meet the needs of our society, our children, and our teachers, democratic values that support child rearing and that support the common good are necessary. Thus, reforms in public education depend upon initiatives and changes in attitudes outside of school systems themselves so that all adults recognize their stake in the education of the nation's children.

Efforts to reform schooling in the United States must take into account the widespread ambivalence, and even disdain, that many Americans hold toward schools. Our leaders rarely have been scholars, and few celebrities have modeled the importance of education.

Specific proposals for school reform range from radical changes, such as encouraging competition between schools by a parental-choice voucher system and beginning schooling on the fourth birthday and ending on the sixteenth birthday, to minor adjustments, such as individualizing school schedules and curricula and enriching teaching techniques. Whatever the changes desired, the process through which reform takes place determines whether or not lasting results occur.

Running through all proposals for school reform is awareness of the fact that there is no justification for the assumption that all children should study the same subjects at exactly the same time and in precisely the same way. There also are varying degrees of recognition that the give and take between teachers and students in classrooms and the adult modeling of learning are the keys to successful education.

In the light of these considerations, MACE suggests the following principles as guidelines for general education reform:

A. Truly Recognize Children as Our Future Citizens

1) Because the economic and social health of the nation depends upon the successful education of all of its children, a national campaign should be undertaken to increase popular awareness of the importance of education for our economy and for our society's future.

2) The roles of parenting and of teaching should be accorded appropriate respect in our society.

3) The United Nations "Convention on the Human Rights of the Child" should be ratified by the United States in order to affirm the civil rights of all children in this country to competent parenting and to appropriate education.

B. Recognize Education as a Life-long Process

1) The education of children begins in their homes through competent parenting that develops their basic learning and social skills essential for performing schoolwork.

2) The education of children continues as a part of their socialization as community members in primary schools where they acquire the knowledge required by their culture and society, learn how to work effectively, and develop critical thinking skills.

3) The career-oriented education of youths takes place in secondary schools, colleges, and universities.

4) The lives of adults are enhanced by opportunities to pursue new knowledge and skills through continuing education.

C. Prepare All Children for Learning in School

1) All children should have adequate food, shelter, health care, protection, and competent parenting.

2) Children should be prepared for learning in school by adequate prenatal and well-baby care and by facilitating competent parenting during the early years of life.

3) Preventive, enriched programs should be provided during the preschool years and early grades for all educationally vulnerable children.

4) General accommodations should be made to individual differences in learning styles in order to prevent learning problems from becoming educational disabilities and handicaps.

D. Design Public Schools to Serve Their Communities

1) Each school should be adapted to the unique needs of its community.

2) Schools should be accountable to the people who depend on their performance: students, parents, communities, and financial supporters.

3) Neighborhood schools are logical and accessible sites for family resource centers with health and social services and parent education in order to deal with poverty, family violence, substance abuse, and learning disabilities that often coexist within the same family.

4) The tax-based funding of public education should be designed to provide equity in education for all children.

E. Involve Parents in Public Schools

1) Because a vital aspect of parenting is participating in the education of one's child, parents should be supported as partners in their children's education and assisted in obtaining the services they need to be competent parents.

2) Education in parenting should be part of the public school curriculum.

3) Workplace policies and practices should accommodate the needs of parents with young and school-age children.

F. Foster Community Collaboration with Schools

1) Public schools should collaborate with other social institutions that promote the development of knowledge and skills, such as the media, libraries, museums, and businesses.

2) Consortia of business and professional organizations should mobilize political support for education and directly collaborate with public schools.

3) Support for individual children with special needs should be drawn from peers, senior citizens, and the *pro bono* contributions of professionals.

4) The collaboration of schools and all community agencies and professionals involved in the lives of children and their families is essential.

G. Transform Schools into Communities for Learning

1) The school building and its classrooms must be safe places with adequate physical resources and with decorum based upon the practice of democratic values.

2) A school should be a community with an educational mission in which the innate attraction of children to learning is encouraged; in which teachers are committed to the success of their students, to collegiality, and to their own learning; and in which the environment and atmosphere are conducive to learning.

3) Education should be regarded as a process of mutual growth for students, teachers, and other school personnel.

4) School administrators should promote collegiality in an atmosphere of mutual respect that enhances self-esteem and personal responsibility among children, parents, teachers, administrators, and supportive professionals.

5) School administrators should encourage site-based management through the collaboration of teachers in the recruitment and evaluation of personnel, the planning of curricula and schedules, and the recognition of exemplary performance.

6) Rewards and forms of recognition should be provided to build pride in a school's culture and the efforts of groups as well as individuals.

7) Classroom teacher-student ratios should be realistic, and peers, parents, and senior citizens should be utilized to supplement the efforts of teachers.

8) Teachers should have time to plan relevant and responsive curricula that address the needs of students for individualized as well as group instruction.

9) Small group cooperative learning and student-teacher matching should be employed wherever possible.

10) Adequate technological resources must be available to all schools, including those required to ensure computer literacy for all children.

11) Technological innovations should be evaluated for their relevance to school populations and for their effectiveness in achieving educational goals before they are adopted.

12) Language development and critical thinking skills should be recognized as inherent components of all educational activities.

H. Foster The Professionalism of Teachers

1) Because the most important element in improving public education is fostering their professionalism and effectiveness, teachers should be financially rewarded commensurate with their training, experience, responsibilities, and effectiveness.

2) Continuing education and inservice training should be designed by and for teachers and offered on an ongoing basis.

3) Because the reliability and validity of current practices are in question, efforts should be made to evaluate teachers on realistic criteria that measure teaching effectiveness rather than test performance.

4) A support system is necessary within each school to help teachers with diagnostic and learning methods for children with special needs in their classrooms.

5) Teachers must not be expected to be all things to all people; their boundaries as educators must be respected.

I. Improve The Education of School Personnel

1) Teacher colleges should seek candidates with compassion for children and enthusiasm for learning.

2) Inducements, such as loan and grant programs, are needed to attract talented people from all backgrounds to teaching careers.

3) The aims of teacher education should be to produce teachers who know what to teach, who know how to teach it, and who know when to ask for supportive services.

4) The education of teachers, school administrators, and school-related professionals should be responsive to the realities of contemporary schools.

5) The education of teachers should include both basic science and applied components.

6) In addition to content teaching methods, student teachers need to learn about motivating students, child development, different learning styles, learning disabilities, group dynamics, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

7) Because new teachers regularly report that they have not been prepared for classroom realities, after graduation teachers should serve at least two years of paid internships under master teachers with children of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds.

8) Accrediting and certifying agencies should emphasize the competencies of educational personnel rather than curricula and schedules.

J. Ensure the Continuity of Interdisciplinary Teamwork

1) The long-term solutions to the public school crisis should involve the coordination of educational, health, mental health, social service, legal, and voluntary resources around children and their families in the communities in which they live through the collaboration of community agencies and school-community interdisciplinary teams.

2) The success of children in school and as adults in later life depends upon integrating a continuum of services from prenatal care to adult vocational rehabilitation services.

3) More practical preparation of educational and clinical professionals for interdisciplinary teamwork is needed to facilitate communication among them.

4) The awarding and renewal of the licensing of clinical professionals should be contingent on providing *pro bono* community service to public schools.

K. Facilitate the Process of Change

1) Because reforms imposed by legislative or executive edict impede collaboration and, therefore, have little lasting effect, school reforms should be carried out with the full collaboration of management, teachers, unions, parents, and communities.

2) In order to change their own attitudes and behavior, individuals need to operate within tolerable zones of personal discomfort. This can best be achieved by leadership that employs communication, problem-solving, and small group dynamic techniques.

3) A common sense of purpose and participation can be achieved through shared objectives, values, routines, and customs that permit individuals to identify with the culture of a school.

4) The evaluation of change in schools should take into account behavior, attitude, and demographic changes as well as achievement testing.

V. Principles for the Education of Individuals with Learning Disabilities

Unfortunately, because the tendency in many schools is to wait for failure and disruptive behavior before addressing learning problems, many children with learning disabilities must endure frustration and despair until they break down. This situation is reinforced by rigid categorical criteria for eligibility for services.

However, when the efforts of children with learning disabilities match the efforts of adults to help them in school, excitement and hope result. When children understand how their brains function and how they can adapt to and compensate for their difficulties in academic subjects, they can take control of their own learning and gain confidence in their ability to lead a satisfying life.

In order to avoid suffering and to convert barriers to learning into surmountable hurdles, the following principles should be applied to the early identification and the management of learning disabilities:

A. Increase Public Awareness of Learning Disabilities

1) A national media campaign should be devoted to individual differences in learning styles and to realistic portrayals of children and adults with educational disabilities and handicaps.

2) Organizations devoted to the research and treatment of learning disabilities should join with other professional and business organizations in collaborative efforts with schools and universities to gain the strength of unified voices.

3) Support should be mustered for expanding existing initiatives that benefit persons with learning disabilities, such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142 and P.L. 99-457); Operation Headstart; the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment of the Social Security Act; the Vocational Rehabilitation Act; and the Education of the Homeless Act.

B. Detect Functional and Educational Disabilities Early

1) Because the prevention and early detection of major brain functional disabilities depends upon focusing special services on the prenatal-to-five age period, fully trained multidisciplinary professionals should be available as consultants to day care and preschool programs as well as to pediatric clinics.

2) Teachers at all levels should be sensitized to the identification of educational disabilities and their management.

3) During both the elementary and secondary years, all teachers should be oriented to the importance of verbal and written language development.

C. Provide a Continuum of Services

1) Professionals who deal with learning disabilities should be concerned with education as a whole, and classroom teachers should be acquainted with the special needs of all their children.

2) In order to match children with appropriate services the organization and deployment of special education professionals must be more efficient and effective.

3) A continuum of specialized services should be provided for educationally disabled

persons with provisions for the resumption of part- or full-time regular education at the earliest possible time.

4) The "cascade" model of special education services should be utilized. It provides for progressively increasing levels of services in a framework that permits flexible movement among them based on the educational needs of specific children. The seven levels in this model are prevention programs, enriched regular class instruction, regular- class supplementary services, part-time special classes, full-time special classes, homebound instruction, and residential placement. The central roles in this model are the coordinating **clinical educator** and the **special educator** who directly support teachers and children.

5) Except for the severely handicapped, self-contained special education classes should be used only as temporary supplements to regular education and not as permanent tracks.

6) Eligibility for specialized services should be based on functional needs rather than on diagnostic categories.

7) Persons with learning disabilities should have access to assistance in their transitions into advanced education and into vocations.

D. Involve Children and Their Parents

1) The capacities and responsibilities for learning actually lie within the children. The responsibilities for motivating them to explore and to understand their brain functional disabilities and to devise and work on compensatory techniques lie with their parents and teachers. Therefore, each child and family should understand that child's disabilities in order to effectively draw upon and support professional efforts to help the child.

2) In order to facilitate communication and the coordination and continuity of services, **interdisciplinary child advocacy teams** of community professionals, parents, and children should be formed to help families access services and acquire needed parenting and advocacy skills.

3) Parents need to become advocates for their children by understanding their children's assets and liabilities; by supporting their children's understanding of their disabilities and motivation to remediate them; by participating in **interdisciplinary child advocacy teams** to bridge educational, mental health, social service, and legal systems; and by informing themselves of their children's legal rights and the resources that should be available to them.

E. Employ a Variety of Approaches

1) Rigid adherence by professionals to narrow perspectives is indefensible because of the diversity of individual needs and the wide variety of strategies, technologies, and resources available to meet them.

2) Remedial approaches should be chosen for their effectiveness in challenging students to higher levels of competence.

3) Although the primary remedial focus might be on specific educational disabilities, such as in listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, mathematics, and task organization, the needs of the whole child should be addressed. Therefore, interventions should take into account disorders of attention and concentration, learning styles, and deficits in self-esteem and self-control, as well as problems in social relationships and the child's family and neighborhood.

4) There also should be a general emphasis on learning critical thinking - an attitude toward enquiry, a knowledge of the methods of reasoning and enquiry, and skill in applying both.

F. Develop the Role of Clinical Educator

1) In order to effectively coordinate the work of specialists in the school-allied disciplines, a professional filling the **clinical educator role** is needed in each school unit for system-bridging case management within that unit and for participation in community- based **interdisciplinary child advocacy** teams.

2) As a support for children, parents, and teachers, the **clinical educator role** integrates home, school, and community resources in order to facilitate a suitable education for children with special needs. The role includes assisting teachers in individualizing instruction; counseling children and parents; collaborating with community health, mental health, legal, and social service system professionals; and maintaining the continuity of a child's education.

3) The training of existing professionals for the **clinical educator role** should be encouraged by the multidisciplinary training of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, speech and language therapists, school nurses, and other educationally relevant professionals.

4) The training of professionals specifically as **clinical educators** requires the incorporation of elements from relevant disciplines in a basic curriculum that includes child development, teaching techniques, educational counseling, family and individual counseling, educational and psychological assessment, remedial strategies, group dynamics, and interdisciplinary teamwork. An internship in a multidisciplinary setting should follow the basic educational program. The selection of appropriate persons suited for this kind of training is important.

G. Provide Administrative Integration and Support

1) Special education services should be administratively incorporated into a school system's total instruction program rather than treated as a separate system.

2) Educational administrators, including special education program directors, principals, and curriculum specialists, should be knowledgeable advocates for services for persons with learning disabilities.

3) In-service programs and released time should be provided for administrators, general teachers, and specialized personnel to improve their knowledge of educational disabilities and handicaps.

VI. Priorities

It is essential that the public realize that solutions to the problems of education necessitate long-term commitments. Therefore, a variety of programs should be piloted and evaluated before being disseminated nationally.

As a high priority, MACE favors demonstration projects in which school boards tailor each school to the needs of its community; in which administrators create climates with high expectations for collegial learning for students and teachers alike and provide supportive services and community connections; in which teachers are able to know and engage in problem-solving dialogues with their students and parents; in which parents can receive education in parenting and adult-oriented programs; and in which students receive regular and special education and contribute to each other's

education.

Many effective models are currently available. From the evaluation of these demonstration projects a variety of models could be developed and adapted to appropriate settings. Valuable information also could be gained to guide teacher education and to develop more appropriate and effective special-education services. The federal government should play a key role in funding research on innovative programs and in disseminating information about them.

There is a pressing need to train professional personnel more efficiently and comprehensively for advocacy, mental health, developmental, and special educational roles in the schools. The training of existing school professionals for **clinical educator roles** and the specific training of **clinical educators** are examples. Most important is **reform in the education** of teachers, school administrators, and school-related personnel.

A **National Education Watch (NEW)** in the public or private sector and staffed by representatives of all disciplines related to education could provide leadership in improving education in the United States by promoting the application of knowledge gained from successful educational programs. Because much is known already about education of high quality, the challenge is how to apply that knowledge. Consequently, a **National Education Watch** could be formed with the collaboration of existing organizations. A **NEW** could exercise national leadership in education through guiding national data collection; analyzing model educational programs and school systems; coordinating federally funded educational research; and disseminating information through publications, the media, and hotlines. A **NEW** could determine the kinds of information needed about populations, testing, curricula, schedules, organizational patterns, change processes, and other relevant parameters. A **NEW** could work with federal agencies, state departments of education, teacher colleges, and professional and lay organizations.

As national attention is focused on general education reform, the needs of special education should not be eclipsed. Special education programs are particularly vulnerable to the social, economic, and political pressures that influence education generally. In their efforts to provide education for children with learning disabilities, school administrators must respond to parents who want new services, to boards of education who must balance budgets, to teaching staffs who seek relief from classroom problems, and to special educators themselves.

Vigilance is needed to counteract the tendencies in school systems to operate to the disadvantage of children with educational problems. Schools have powerful mechanisms for relieving stresses within their systems at the peril of affected children. Therefore, an ever-present hazard is that special education placement can be used as a means of segregating children who pose educational problems.

More specifically, the funding mechanisms for special education create incentives for local and school districts to segregate children; often funds are allotted only to discrete programs and not to special instruction in regular class settings. This segregation also is fostered by categorizing children by handicapping conditions rather than by their particular educational needs.

VI. Conclusion

MACE stands ready to collaborate with other groups as they confront the dilemmas involved in improving our faltering public schools.

We can say that whether one is considering a school in an affluent or a disadvantaged area, the fundamental issues are the same. Do the teachers feel competent? Do they know, respect, and care about their students? Do they understand why some children do well and others founder? Do they feel supported by their parents and communities and by their administrators and colleagues? In short, do they feel that they are doing a good job?

Negative answers to any of these questions, particularly the last one, reveal deficits in the "schooling industry" that lacks long-range criteria for success. Therefore, the success of education depends upon how students and teachers relate to each other during particular periods of time.

Although the primary interest of MACE is in the needs of students with learning disabilities, the prior question is whether or not teachers in regular classrooms in a particular school building are prepared to deal with the needs of most of their students. If the answer is affirmative and the numbers of those with needs they cannot meet are small, we can offer more specific suggestions about the prevention and management of learning disabilities. Otherwise the first priority is general school reform.

CALL TO ACTION

The Multidisciplinary Academy of Clinical Education strongly supports the following objectives of the President's reform proposal, America 2000: An Education Strategy:

1) Develop public support for these national educational goals:

   * All children start school ready to learn
   * Ninety-percent high-school graduation rate
   * Maximum use of educational technology
   * Demonstration of student competency in academics and citizenship
   * Safe school environments conducive to learning and free of drugs and violence
   * Literacy and life-long learning for all adults.

2) Form Research and Development Teams to create new learning environments in schools.

3) Promote local, school-based control and initiatives.

4) Create exemplary model schools that "break the mold" of existing school designs.

5) Honor Merit Schools.

6) Enlist the resources of business and industry in educational research and development.

In order to reach these goals, the Multidisciplinary Academy of Clinical Education recommends the following specific actions:

I. REVERSE THE "HOPELESS" IMAGE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public education is not hopeless. There are many successful public schools operating in both advantaged and disadvantaged environments. They need to be recognized, and the public should know about them. They should be publicized for professionals through a national clearinghouse, such as a National Education Watch, and for the public through the media.

II. TRANSFORM ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS INTO CARING, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS: COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Harnessing the energies and hopes of neighborhood communities to improve their schools requires more vision and political will than money. All public schools should be caring, supportive, respectful environments that are responsive to the needs of their communities. Such environments bring out the best in teachers and students and reduce the need for special educational programs. Respect and support for each child would result in personalized education and avoid the proliferation, fragmentation, and financial costs of special education.

III. APPLY THE COLLABORATIVE MODEL TO SCHOOLS

The responsibility for successful education lies with parents, educators, students, professionals, and their communities. We cannot demand collaboration; we must be shown how to collaborate. Training in small-group collaboration is the most effective way of bringing people together around shared objectives and of building community participation. Collaboration between all community agencies involved in the lives of children and their families also is essential.

IV. COORDINATE FAMILY SERVICES AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The consolidation and coordination of vocational, continuing education, day-care, health care, human service, family counseling, parent training, legal, mental health, and other family-related services in community schools is more efficient and effective than perpetuating the present fragmentation and lack of coordination of these services. Such site consolidation would save administrative, housing, and transportation costs, as well as increase accessibility and consequent utilization of prevention and treatment programs.

V. DEVELOP NEW SOURCES OF VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Drawing upon community resources, such as the following, would reduce the costs of professional and educational services in the schools:

* Professionals could be required to provide *pro bono* service as a condition of licensure.
* Candidates for advanced degrees in clinical fields could provide services in the context of their training.
* High school students could support younger students as a part of their curriculum.
* Senior citizens could provide a variety of volunteer services.

VI. ESTABLISH MULTIPLE ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS

The accountability of public schools should not be limited to the achievement testing of students alone. Accountability standards should include:

* The acquisition, comprehension, and use of English as the base language critical for the mastery of the school curriculum.
* Critical and problem-solving thinking.
* Competency in mathematics, the physical and social sciences, and the liberal arts.
* Prosocial behavior (reduction in dropouts, vandalism, violence, teenage pregnancies).
* Positive self-esteem of students and teachers.
* Parental participation in, and support of, the education of their children in school and at home.

VII. REFORM SELECTION & TRAINING OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

The success of any educational reform depends upon the commitment, training, and personal qualities of teachers, administrators, and supportive school personnel. For these reasons:

* Students should be selected on the basis of their compassion for children, enthusiasm for learning, and interpersonal talents.
* Scholarships and stipends should be provided for prospective school personnel with these qualities.
* Teacher education should include knowledge of child development and training in collaborative teamwork in addition to pedagogy and curriculum.
* A two-year paid internship and subsequent mentoring should be provided for beginning teachers.
* School administrators should be trained in group dynamics and in collaborative techniques.
* Supportive school professionals should receive multidisciplinary training in the clinical educator role so that they can function in case managing, coordinating, and facilitating roles in each public school unit.

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